

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY HELSINKI

AMEMBASSY LONDON

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AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

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SUBJECT: ICELAND-UK FISHERIES DISPUTE: POLITICAL LEADERS' YEAR-END STATEMENTS

1. FISHERIES DISPUTE AND ECONOMIC SITUATION DOMINATED ANNUAL TURN-OF-YEAR STATEMENTS BY CHAIRMEN AND OTHER LEADERS OF ICELAND'S POLITICAL PARTIES. FOLLOWING ARE HIGHLIGHTS OF COMMENTS ON FISHERIES ISSUE AND RELATED FOREIGN POLICY MATTERS FROM VARIOUS POLITICAL LEADERS.

2. PRIME MINISTER AND INDEPENDENCE PARTY CHAIRMAN GEIR HALLGRIMSSON DEVOTED MORE THAN ONE-THIRD OF LENGTHY YEAR-END ARTICLE IN UNCLASSIFIED

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MORGUNBLADID TO FISHERIES DISPUTE WITH BRITISH. PM CRITICIZED

UK'S RESORT TO FORCE AND POINTED OUT CONSEQUENT DANGER TO LIVES ON FISHING GROUNDS. WITHOUT MAJOR POLICY CHANGE ON UK'S PART, HALLGRIMSSON SAW LITTLE BASIS FOR SETTLEMENT. HE STRESSED THAT TIME IS ON ICELAND'S SIDE SINCE GOI EXPECTS AGREEMENT ON 200-MILE ECONOMIC ZONE AT UPCOMING LOS SESSIONS. MEANWHILE, PM SAID, ICELAND ENJOYS INCREASED INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT FOR ITS CAUSE. IN PARTICULAR, ICELAND HAS SYMPATHY OF MOST NATO MEMBERS AND FOR THIS REASON, HALLGRIMSSON MAINTAINED, IT WOULD BE MISTAKE FOR ICELAND TO ISOLATE ITSELF FROM NATO; ON CONTRARY, ICELAND SHOULD WORK WITHIN ALLIANCE TO ISOLATE UK. PM RECALLED THAT GOI HAD COMPLAINED TO UN SECURITY COUNCIL OVER BRITISH TRACTICS AND POINTED OUT THAT MATTER COULD BE RAISED IN THAT FORUM AGAIN AT ANY TIME. THEREFORE, HE SAID, GOI SHOULD SEEK SUPPORT OF MAXIMUM NUMBER OF SECURITY COUNCIL MEMBERS. HALLGRIMSSON NOTED THAT THERE HAD BEEN CALLS IN ICELAND FOR RADICAL COUNTER-MEASURES AGAINST BRITISH. HE SAID NO ACTION WHICH COULD HELP ICELAND'S CAUSE WOULD BE RULED OUT AT THIS STAGE. (PRIMEMIN, IN STATEMENT, ALSO MENTIONED BRIEFLY 1975 NATO SUMMIT, WHICH HE WELCOMED AS REAFFIRMING GOALS OF ALLIANCE, AND CSCE, ON WHICH HE SAID FINAL VERDICT IS NOT YET IN.)

3. PROGRESSIVE PARTY CHAIRMAN AND FORMER PRIME MINISTER OLAFUR JOHANNESSON STRESSED ECONOMIC AND LEGAL JUSTIFICATION FOR ICELAND'S FISHERIES POLICY IN TWO-PAGE TIMINN ARTICLE. HE NOTED THAT FISHING IS OF VITAL IMPORTANCE TO ICELAND AND THAT COUNTRY COULD NOT WAIT FOR INTERNATIONAL SANCTION FOR EXTENSIONS OF LIMITS. STILL, GOI HAD BEEN WILLING TO REACH SETTLEMENT WITH OTHER INTERESTED NATIONS, BUT UNREASONABLE DEMANDS OF UK PREVENTED THIS. NOW, JOHANNESSON SAID, NEGOTIATIONS WERE OUT OF QUESTION AS LONG AS BRITISH CONTINUED MILITARY MEASURES AND POACHING IN ICELAND'S WATERS. HE PREDICTED LONG, HARD STRUGGLE.

4. ALTHING FOREIGN RELATIONS CHAIRMAN THORARINN THORARINSSON (PP) REPEATED, IN YEAR-END INTERVIEW, HIS EARLIER WARNING THAT FURTHER UK RAMMINGS OF ICELANDIC VESSELS WOULD LEAD TO BREAK IN DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS. THORARINSSON SAID FISHERIES AND DEFENSE ISSUES SHOULD NOT BECOME MIXED BUT WARNED "THAT CONTINUED RAMMING ATTEMPTS AND OTHER AGRESSION BY UK WARSHIPS COULD LEAD TO SHARP SHIFT IN PUBLIC OPINION--NOT ONLY AGAINST UK BUT ALSO AGAINST UNITED STATES (AND) POLICY OF NEUTRALITY COULD GET MAJORITY SUPPORT IN, FOR EXAMPLE, NATIONAL REFERENDUM."

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5. SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY CHAIRMAN BENEDIKT GRONDAL POINTED OUT THAT NATO HAS IMPORTANT DEFENSE CONSIDERATIONS IN ICELAND WHICH OUTWEIGH INTERESTS OF BRITISH FISHERMEN. THEREFORE, GRONDAL SAID, NATO AND U.S. WILL HOPEFULLY PUT PRESSURE ON BRITISH. GRONDAL RECALLED THAT NATO AND ITS MEMBER STATES HAD BEEN HELPFUL IN PREVIOUS COD WARS AND COULD HELP AGAIN. HE SAID NATO MEMBERSHIP IS ICELANDIC STRONGPOINT IN FISHERIES DISPUTE WHICH WOULD BE LOST IF

ICELAND WERE TO LEAVE ALLIANCE.

6. PEOPLES ALLIANCE CHAIRMAN RAGNAR ARNALDS CRITICIZED ALLEGED GOI SOFTNESS IN FACE OF BRITISH AGGRESSION. HE CALLED FOR BREAK IN DIPLOMATIC TIES AND CLOSING OF EMBASSY IN LONDON, AS WELL AS STRENGTHENING COAST GUARD REGARDLESS OF COST. REMAINDER OF ARNALDS' COMMENTS ON FISHERIES DISPUTE FOLLOWED FAMILIAR PA LINE: NEED TO PROTECT FISH STOCKS AND EXCLUDE FOREIGNERS FROM INSIDE 50 MILES. HE DID NOT RAISE NATO OR DEFENSE POLICY.

7. MAGNUS TORFI OLAFSSON, CHAIRMAN OF ORGANIZATION OF LIBERALS AND LEFTISTS, SAID IN INTERVIEW THAT GOI SHOULD ATTEMPT TO ISOLATE UK POLITICALLY IN UN, NATO, AND EEC. HE ALSO URGED STEPPED-UP USE OF COAST GUARD TO HINDER BRITISH FISHING IN DISPUTED WATERS.
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